

Healthy eating, meal times and exercise Policy

At Mereside Farm we believe that mealtimes should be happy, social occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times.

We are committed to offering children healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements.

Healthy Eating from an early age is vital to give children the best possible start in life. Good nutrition is important even before children are born, and right through their lives. Children's habits and preferences for food are set at a very early age, which is why healthy eating practices are even more important in the first few years of life than when children grow older and begin their school years.

We will ensure that:

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery.
- Menus are planned, rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These are displayed for children and parents to view.
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies and intake is monitored. In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated
- Individual dietary requirements are respected. We gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has and any special health requirements before a child starts or joins the nursery. Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child.
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks. Where appropriate, age/stage discussions will also take place with all children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods.
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy
- Meal and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate in small groups. During meals and snack times children are

encouraged to use their manners and say 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged

- Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves
- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected
- Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal he/she does not like will have his/her food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish his/her first course, he/she will still be given a small helping of dessert
- Children not on special diets are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything
- Children who refuse to eat at lunchtime are offered their food later in the day – for example if young babies are tired, their food will be kept in hot hold following food safety guidelines or rapidly cooled and refrigerated to be served when they wake. There are snacks between mealtimes so if a child does not eat a meal there will be a short period of time before another snack/meal is offered.
- If a child refuses 2 meals, we will let the parents know so that they are aware their child has not eaten for a few hours.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play opportunities and discussions
- The nursery provides parents with daily information of what has been eaten via the parent zone app.
- No child is ever left alone when eating/drinking to minimise the risk of choking
- We will sometimes celebrate special occasions such as birthdays with the occasional treat of foods such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes to prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite. Where we have frequent birthdays and celebrations, we consider other alternatives such as celebrating through smiles and praise, stickers and badges, choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song
- We do allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions and check all children are able to eat anything brought in before it is given out.
- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene which is updated every three years
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

Partnership with parents and carers

- The partnership of home and nursery is critical in shaping how children behave, particularly where health is concerned, each should reinforce the other.

- If parents request advice or support with their child's eating, we will help wherever possible but will suggest support from other agencies where appropriate for example the health visitor.
- As part of the induction to nursery, parents will be asked to share information on their child's dietary requirements (including any allergies).

Exercise

Our aim is to encourage all children to be physically active to help them to achieve good health. We aim to do this by:

- Accessing the outdoors as often as possible during the nursery day.
- Providing a variety of equipment for children to use outdoors, e.g. slides, bikes, hoops, balls etc.
- Talking to the children about how we stay healthy and look after our bodies through our day to day routines and activities, such as hand washing and toileting.
- Encouraging physical activity outdoors in all weathers.
- Encouraging rest periods in balance with exercise.
- Encouraging fine motor development alongside large physical development through a variety of activities.

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